Didactic Victorianism: Chinese Eunuchs and Mormon Polygamy in the Late Nineteenth Century

Deysy Ordóñez-Areola
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Advising Professor: Dorothy Ko
Weatherhead East Asian Institute
Columbia University

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Recognising bodies as objects enables the manipulation, control and essentially the
governmentality thereof.\(^1\) Contextualizing bodies as “objects over which we labour” through
individual and collective body practices, the ways in which bodies are produced, cultivated and
disciplined essentially become ritualistic and often seemingly natural.\(^2\) Feeding, clothing,
washing our bodies and so forth, are practices that do not cause a flinch, a look of disgust, or a
thought of pity. However, society does not easily accept or understand some body practices.
Throughout China’s dynastic history, various forms of body practices were deeply rooted in
cultural rituals and symbolisms. For example, the practice of foot binding, although it hindered
women’s ability to walk, could be a symbol of femininity and social rank. Some male bodies also
partook in body practices, specifically castration. Unlike the slow shape-changing process of foot
binding, the effect of castration was immediate. With the slash of a knife the male genitals, cut
off in part or completely, often leaving the body bare of any genitals, making a eunuch. Created
by royal force initially as a palace punishment [宮刑 gōngxíng] under the laws created by the
Duke of Zhou [周公 Zhōugōng], brother of King Wu [武王 Wǔwáng] of the Zhou Dynasty [周
Zhōu], about 1100 B.C., eunuchs were not regarded as castrated males—still maintaining their
identity as males—rather they were classified and defined as eunuchs [宦官 huànguān]—by the
emperor and, with a trickledown effect, by Chinese society.\(^3\) In essence, castration, while it led to
the loss of male body parts, was a productive force in Chinese society. While the obvious servile
role of eunuchs is apparent in Chinese history, the eunuch entity also served as a vehicle to
address the social world of the West and its anxieties. It played a role in Western imagination
and its experience of the East. In this paper, I aim to focus on the early Western understanding of
the Chinese eunuch, the making of the Chinese eunuch identity, as well as the activities and
social influences of Victorian writers. More specifically, I examine the article “Chinese Eunuchs”
written by George Carter Stent in 1877—the earliest literature written by a Westerner in China,
for a Western audience, on Chinese eunuchs. I aim to show that by describing eunuchs in China,
Stent gave the West a defining lens with which to view eunuchs, while creating a common
foundation of rationality to extend order and maximize control over his audience demographics.\(^4\)
Essentially, by concurrently criticising the origin and motives for creating eunuchs and using his
observations to address anxieties in Victorian England, Stent didactically enhanced the need for
strong Christian ethical and moral values.\(^5\)

George Carter Stent, born in Canterbury, England, on June 15, 1833, enlisted in the
British Army’s 14\(^{th}\) Regiment Dragoons as a private in 1855 “with a desire to see a little of life in

\(^1\) Taking Foucauldian approach, Turner describes, “Governmentality has become the common foundation
of modern political rationality in which the administrative systems of the state have been extended in order to
maximize productive control over the demographic process of the population.” Bryan S. Turner, The Body &

\(^2\) Ibid., 3, 161.

\(^3\) G. Carter Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society New
Series, no. 11, Shanghai (1877): 147; Taisuke Mitamura, Chinese Eunuchs: The Structure of Intimate Politics,

\(^4\) Turner, The Body & Society: Explorations in Social Theory: 3.

foreign countries.” After serving in India, Stent moved to Beijing, China in the mid-1860s as a member of the Royal British Legion Guard. There, he studied the Beijing dialect by himself, a feat that won him praise post-mortem by the Inspectorate General of Customs, Statistical Department in Shanghai in 1905: “by industry and native ability, [Stent] raised himself into a leading position among the sinologues of his day.” Recruited into the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service in 1869, Stent moved from Beijing to Shanghai. It was from Shanghai that in 1877 he reported his observations on eunuchs to the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. His thirty-nine page report, “Chinese Eunuchs,” which was later published in the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Journal, provided a response through his observations to the “exotic” social environment of China that was home to eunuchs. Through the elucidation of the social environment that produced eunuchs, Stent corrected the knowledge previously disseminated about them from other parts of the world, while glorifying the system of social norms and regulations of the West. He claimed that all knowledge relating to eunuchs was so vague that it seemed that eunuchs only existed in “the Arabian Night’s Entertainments and other eastern tales, or in the imaginations of the writers, rather than actually belonging to and forming no inconsiderable portion of the human race.” Thus, in efforts to correct such assumptions, Stent, a tax collection officer with no formal anthropological or sociological training, provided his “expert” account of facts relating to eunuchs in China.

On March 26, 1877, Stent presented his article “Chinese Eunuchs” to the Society. Therein he declared that “with one trifling exception” eunuchs existed only in “eastern despotic countries” because of their lack of Christian values. In fact, he stated, “the enlightening influence of Christianity” prevented “such unnatural proceedings… [to be] practiced in the countries of those who profess[ed] it [Christianity].” To further emphasize the benefits of Christianity, he stressed that Christians were “free from the baneful practice” of castration—“a vile blot on less fortunate countries.” Moreover, the need to castrate a male showed in “what a low estimation


9 Stent, “Chinese Eunuchs,” 143.

10 Although Stent does not directly refer to the “one trifling exception,” he speaks of Italian and Greek castrations. Idem.

11 Idem. The French Dr. Jean-Jacques Matignon, presented his paper “Les Eunuques Du Palais Impérial À Pékin” (Eunuchs of the Imperial Palace in Beijing) in 1896 to the Paris Bulletin of the Anthropology Society. In it, he defended his Christian beliefs and asserted that, although eunuchs were seen throughout the histories of multiple world regions, “the Christian emperors, especially Constantine and Justinian made prohibitive laws against castration, which was punishable by the law of retaliation.” Evidently, he too agreed with Stent’s righteous thought of Christianity. J.-J. Matignon, “Les eunuques du Palais Impérial à Pékin.” (paper presented at the Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, 1896), 327.
the women of these countries” were held considering that their “husbands or masters conceive[d] it necessary to resort to such horrible mutilations of one sex to keep the other pure.” Stent summarized that eunuchs were “kept to mark the rank of the owner, to add to the dignity of his establishment, and other balderdash of a like nature.” He declared that eunuch owners actually had no other reason to have eunuchs apart from the motives of “suspicion, distrust and jealousy of eastern potentates and others, of the fidelity of their wives and concubines; and the dread that if men were employed [within the royal court], licentiousness and profligacy would run riot in their harems.” Therefore, the creation of eunuchs came about as a means to obtain some sort of control over the chaos that the sexuality of Chinese women bred. Stent rationalized that if the Chinese were Christians, there would not have been a necessity to “mutilate” men to keep and control the purity of women. Women would have innately known their place in society, and would have submitted themselves to men as “good” Christian women. However, the opposite was true which “lead to domestic troubles and even a decline of the family” and furthered the need to create eunuchs. In essence, Stent provided a classification of purity and impurity to contrast the disorder of Chinese social morals that led to the creation of eunuchs, in comparison to the orderly traditional West. He adhered to the imagined conceptualization of Asia as a “passionate, irrational, and erotic world—a land of ‘disorderly imagination’ set in opposition to the progressive, rational, and scientific world” of the West.

Moreover, by distinguishing the gendered roles of women and men, and thus applying a label to two different—but known—entities of society, Stent organized his environment by making it conform to the social reality of the West (or rather the idealized social reality of the West). He essentially used labels and categories to re-order what was already familiar to his audience and inserted it within such known parameters. Each label was associated with people, actions, and characteristics thereof. Accordingly, society expected a woman to have a “husband” or a “master” who would provide the specificities and appropriate modes of conduct for women. After all, Western society considered women to be possessions of the believed-to-be superior male gender. Considering that, the normative familial relationships, “governed matters such as marriage, wifehood, widowhood, sex segregation, and seclusion of women,” control over women and their roles were in essence “indispensable to family harmony and solidarity.” More to the point, by separating female roles (through “dividing practices”) Stent upheld boundaries within the female-male dichotomy, without the need to make a direct reference, thereby elevating his own gender and status. Therefore, he adhered to the Western way of seeing themselves as “...a

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12 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 143.
13 Idem.
14 Idem.
16 Hugh B. Urban, Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 47.
19 Liu, "The Clan Rules on Family Relationships."
distinct, special, and—often—superior people. [Who] could contrast their law, their standard of living, their treatment of women, their political stability, and, above all, their collective power against societies that they only imperfectly understood usually perceived as far less developed.”

Not only did such distinctions adhere to the “Western imagination as an essentially masculine, aggressive, patriarchal culture,” they also enhanced the superiority complex of Western thought, modes of conduct, and developed knowledge thereof.

In order to understand the imagined land of disorder that Stent described in his report, it is imperative to contextualize the social moral attitudes towards sexuality of the West in the nineteenth century. Queen Victoria reigned over Great Britain from 1837 to 1901, and “these sixty-four years approximate the cultural dominion of what we call ‘Victorianism.’” The Victorian culture may be characterized through the “climactic era of modernization for the English-speakers,” where “modernization in Britain and the United States” was considered an “extraordinarily protracted development, partly because they were the first people to undergo its industrial stages.”

Thus, while Victorianism had an English bourgeois and “ethno-religious” origin, “the Victorian cultural community constituted an international reference group in the nineteenth-century world” which was “particularly self-conscious about their [British and American] culture.” In essence, Victorianism was not the “exclusive attribute of any social group or groups,” particularly of any group in the United States, but was rather “a set of cultural motifs.”

The value system that defined such set of cultural motifs “represented a combination of premodern modes of thought (patriarchalism, English common law) with attitudes specifically linked to the modernization process.” The ideals associated with modernization “taught people to work hard, to postpone gratification, to repress themselves sexually, to ‘improve’ themselves, to be sober, conscientious, [and] even compulsive.” Although these values were not novel to British or American society, there was more demand and “zealous support than ever before and for the rest of the century they exerted unprecedented influence on the shaping of British and American society.”

While not all Americans or British were Victorians, the most active and “articulate propagators of American Victorian culture” came from the bourgeoisie that tried to create social order through didactic propaganda infused “with a measure of social responsibility, strict personal morality, and respect for cultural standards.” The didactic culture of Victorian life “was not only moral absolutism but also a faith in redemption.” Thus in efforts to enlighten those ignorant of sin, Victorians used printed media as a tool to teach and create social order as they “sought to shape the quality of life.”

Advancements in communication and technology enabled the heightened concern over the “emergence of mass society” and the “public opinion

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28 Idem.
29 Idem.
30 Idem.
had to be redefined in the Western world to take account of new means of communication and great increase in literacy.”

Polygyny and sexual pervasion were key issues with which didactic Victorianism concerned itself. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States’ “social conscience was confronted with the issue of Mormon polygamy.”

Coincidentally, elite British travelled by “transcontinental railroad across the American West via Salt Lake City, Utah, the capital of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons.” The American and British, more specifically Victorian, belief of “continuity between natural and moral law” was disturbed. Similar to the American “immediate, indignant[,] and negative response” to Mormon polygamy, British also considered polygamy an object of public concern.

Polygamists took on an unnatural social deviant role in the eyes of Christians and exploited the Victorian crusade of the “will of Christ.” Polygamy was not only “a threat to sexual ethics and values but also [a threat to] the institutional order” that rested on the values holding family as the core of civilization.

The Victorian imagination created a “single fantastic image of sex, violence, and the transgression of every imaginable moral law” that exploited all Victorian fears of sexuality and familial chaos.

In essence, polygamy comparatively was “no greater contrast to the perfection of Christianity.” Thus, the Western interest in sexual perversions of Chinese society was a reflection of the major issues of sexuality in Victorian social and political practice.

Curiously, Stent did not label the Chinese eunuchs sexual perverts. Correcting representations of eunuchs, Stent continued to describe eunuchs while demarcating the boundaries of that which were familiar to his audience. Acknowledging that eunuchs were represented by Chinese people as “vindictive and revengeful in disposition,” and taking into consideration the possibility of such representation ever being true, Stent defended eunuchs. He

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33 Ibid., 511. Howe argues that Victorianism was not only a value system but also a system of communications. He notes that, “The communications system of Victorianism was based on the English language and the media of print and (in due course) the telegraph and telephone. Knowledge of English put one in potential contact with a particular cultural heritage, including law, religion, and science, and enabled one to deal with established political institutions in the United States. Literacy and exposure to instant long-distance communication magnified the impact language could have. Since the electronic media did not achieve their major impact until the twentieth century, the nineteenth was characteristically an age of print. In 1811 the steam-powered printing press was invented. Its impact was enhanced by the economical manufacture of paper from wood pulp and improvements in the transportation system facilitating dissemination of printed materials. Magazines and novels became important vehicles for communication; newspapers and tracts proliferated.” Ibid., 525.


37 Ibid., 63.

38 Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," 525.


41 Ibid., 48.

42 Ibid., 47.

stated that if eunuchs were castrated in their childhood, “and against their own inclination, the injustice and barbarity perpetrated on them” consequently made it natural for them to “breed and develop all those vices” often associated with them and become “objects of hate and fear.” It was an understandable side effect for eunuchs to develop feelings of hate towards their parents and often “in after years, refuse to hold any intercourse with them,” as their parents were the cause of their “life-long degradation, impotency and misery.” However not all eunuchs were castrated in their childhood. Thus, Stent also addressed those castrated during or after adolescence. He noted that if they had “enjoyed intercourse with the opposite sex previous to castration or mutilation—either with or without their own consent,” no punishment could be “conceived more horrible than that which they [eunuchs] daily and hourly endure—that of seeing women in their most abandoned moments, and knowing at the same time they have forever lost their virility, and consequently, all power of the greatest enjoyment in life.” As an adult male, Stent related to the pre-castration life of those castrated in their later years of life. Acknowledging a loss of manhood, Stent concluded that those who experienced sexual intercourse before castration felt “the loss of their virility much more keenly than those who have been made eunuchs before they felt or experienced those mysterious workings of nature which accompany the adolescence of both sexes.” It was reasonable that they would tend to easily become bitter and filled with venom, “ill-concealed envy [,] and hate” for they were victims of barbarity. Stent essentially empathetically rationalized in favour of the eunuchs. All evil that attributed to eunuchs was not a desired product of eunuchs, but rather a by-product of the production process itself. The negative attributes representative of eunuchs were part of the physical and cultural construction of eunuchs created by the Chinese lack of Christian morals and their barbarous social actions.

Proceeding to share his expert knowledge of eunuchs, Stent asserted control over what his audience would learn to associate with Chinese eunuchs, as he recognized the scarcity of accurate information disseminated to Westerners regarding such topic, and thereby dominated it. He endeavoured to give what he considered a brief account of the origin of eunuchs while focusing on Chinese history and the mode by which Chinese deprived eunuchs of “their procreative powers, which would seem also to deprive them of every virtue, leaving them vile and contemptible.” Stent, acting as a keeper of genuine and truthful knowledge, provided a contextual preamble for his audience. He used the Bible and literature familiar to his audience, such as Herodotus, to interweave Chinese historical facts obtained through his research. For instance, he quoted the Dictionary of the Bible stating that, “the moral tendency of this [eunuch] sad condition is well known to be the repression of courage, gentleness, shame and remorse, the

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44 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 143.
45 Idem.
46 In 1893, American medical missionary Dr. Robert Coltman Jr. while assigned to the American Presbyterian Mission in Peking wrote that he “never for a moment supposed the mutilation extended beyond the removal of the testicles, nor did I [he] suppose that any but children were thus treated.” With such assumptions, one may presume that perhaps Stent’s effort to correct assumptions of eunuchs did not penetrate as deeply as he would have liked. Robert Coltman, "Self-Made Eunuchs," Universal Medical Journal 1(1893).
47 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 143.
48 Idem.
49 Idem.
51 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 144.
development of malice, and often of melancholy, a disposition to suicide.” Thereby Stent established—even before delving into the core of his observations—a notion that being a eunuch was not only a sad condition but also an outgrowth of the lack of essential attributes of good moral standing, which consequently led to malevolence. He not only provided new information regarding eunuchs but also was able to communicate smoothly the meanings of his findings to his Western audience. Collective symbols, which manifested collective purposes and evaluations, such as the Bible, enabled Stent’s clear portrayal of his observations and intents. Thus, Stent recognized the communal standardized values of the West and symbols attached thereto, which enabled him to organize the knowledge he provided and mediate the experience of his audience. Ultimately, by systematically organizing presuppositions and beliefs of his audience, he mediated his observations. Essentially, Stent used “a set of socially given symbols” to manipulate the thoughts and associations that his readers had and thus his shift from a tax collection officer to an untrained anthropologist seemed unnoticed and completely valid.

Stent proceeded to contextualize further eunuchs throughout history while establishing his credibility, and providing contrasting means of moral measure. He described Chinese rulers as men who gave “themselves up to pleasures—betaking themselves to the harem.” Without morals, overwhelmed by their sexual impulse, the rulers were unable to control their desires. Completely alienated from morality and virtue, unrestrained sensuality consumed the rulers and thus needed eunuchs to maintain order. Stent noted that Emperor QinShi [ 秦始皇 Qínshǐhuáng], the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty [ 秦 Qín] about 250 B.C., built the Epanggong palace [ 阿房宫 épánggōng] that Stent incorrectly referred to as 娥皇宮 [éhuánggōng]. In the palace the emperor ...

…kept three thousand beautiful concubines who were attended by innumerable female servants. After he had dismissed his court, the emperor loved to come hither and enjoy himself in the society of the ladies, drinking with them, listening to their music, or strolling with them through the beautiful gardens [within his palace walls]. While the emperor indulged in pleasures with the multitude of women, “it was impossible to keep so immense a place in order with women only.” Although the emperor had female servants, they were not capable of keeping order according to the male dominant social values that defined women as the lesser, irrational and incapable gender. As objects, his concubines were not to keep order meant but rather were to provide pleasure on command. Ironically, a powerful ruler—even after implementing an incarceration sentence on his concubines, prohibiting them from leaving the imperial palace, and isolating them from all males, could not keep order in his own palace under the spells of pleasure. Despite the need to have servants, the

52 Edited by William Smith in the nineteenth century, the Dictionary of the Bible was a reference dictionary of the Bible in which contained over 4,000 entries of the like. *Idem.*
56 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 146.
59 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 146.
60 *Ibid.*, 150.
emperor “feared the ladies would give way to licentiousness were he to employ men to do the necessary work. [therefore] the emperor selected a great number of lads who were made eunuchs for this purpose.”

Unable to trust neither men nor women, and lacking essential Christian values, thus unable to control his sexual desire, the emperor resorted to the less civilized option of dealing with his dilemma. He resorted to the barbaric mutilation of males, which created palace servants—eunuchs.

Similar to the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Stent described the licentious Emperor Yang [煬帝 Yángdì] of the Sui Dynasty [隋 Suí], about 600 A.D., who was not content with one palace and built six palaces. In these six palaces, like his predecessor, Emperor Yang kept three thousand concubines entrusted to the charge of a eunuch, named Xu Yuan [許冤 XùYuān].

Witnessing, coordinating and assisting the “licentious monarch in many of his voluptuous orgies,” eunuchs became a type of knowledge keepers who “could tell strange tales of eastern licentiousness and despotism in the harem, had they the opportunity of doing so—safely.” In essence, eunuchs were caregivers who needed to cover up and facilitate licentious and despotic activities. Therefore the “system of employing eunuchs in the palace was found to answer; and gave such satisfaction, that finding, in the lapse of years and the increase of licentiousness.”

Thus, the notion of castration as a punishment became a needed service to maintain order and became by “custom or necessity an established rule,” which enabled the breeding of even more licentiousness.

Stent proceeded to describe eunuchs and the system based on his personal observations and “fieldwork.” Having established the history of the system of employing eunuchs, Stent described the system as it stood in 1877. Only the imperial family could employ eunuchs. With such strict confinement of employment, the emperor “ought to have 3,000 eunuchs to perform the various duties of the palace.”

By noting that the emperor had about 3,000 eunuchs, Stent showed his audience that with years, the production of eunuchs increased, and so did licentious activity. In essence, the eunuch body was “employed to legitimate political and social” practices such as the royal practice of polygamy. Instead of condoning such immoral behavior, the existence of eunuchs encouraged it.

Considering that eunuchs were manmade, the lack of discipline, order and morality as well as increase in licentious activities in Chinese society, according to Stent’s logic, created a system of eunuch production. Treating eunuchs as objects produced—like a purchased commodity— Stent described how eunuchs were procured, from whence they were “procured, and who furnish them.” He noted that it was the obligation of princes to gather sufficient eunuchs to fulfil their quinquennial quota contribution to the imperial palace with an exchange

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61 Idem.
62 Ibid., 153.
63 Ibid., 147.
64 Ibid., 148.
65 Idem.
66 Ibid., 166.
68 Ibid., 44.
rate of 260 taels ($348.40 USD) per eunuch. Yet, while lucrative, such princely obligation did not always supply the eunuchs needed to assist fully the imperial palace. Other sources also provided eunuchs. He described that “large numbers of boys, and even grown up men—either purchased from their relatives or voluntarily offering them,” underwent emasculation and upon their recovery from the operation, entered the draft to serve the palace.

Stent detailed three reasons for which people became eunuchs: compulsion, poverty, and “choice—or rather laziness.” Parents or relatives compelled young boys to become eunuchs for the sake of the money that would “accrue to them [parents or relatives of the eunuch-to-be] by the sale of the boys for that purpose, or from the desire of seeing them provided for in life.” Evidently, Chinese parents and relatives also gave into sinful greed and even used their children as a means to obtain money. Consequently, the bodies of such boys were “regulated and organized in the interests” of their families. The pressure they felt to obey compulsively as filial children, created a social bond expressing and reaffirming the social relations dictated by filial piety. Thus, Stent further showed the weakness of Chinese will as their “struggle over desire” was seemingly a failure. He juxtaposed the triumph of desire versus Chinese people to push further the need for “rationally regulated action.” Further noting the defeat of Chinese will against sins, he cited an “instance of a failure” in which a man self-castrated himself, “but did it so clumsily that no one would employ him. He, therefore, had mutilated himself for life without gratifying his desire of living the easy life of a eunuch.” With such anecdotes, Stent stated that laziness was not a rightful option but rather was associated with failure and clumsiness—an association of the moral-less, weaker people. Essentially Stent created a “them” vs. “us” dichotomy among the Western grids of specification in which lazy, greedy Chinese men gave

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70 U. S. Congress. House and U. S. Department of the Treasury. "Value of the tael of China. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury in relation to the value of the tael of China. April 1, 1870. -- Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed.” (1870).

71 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 176. S. Wells Williams in his survey of China titled, “The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants,” noted 1,000 less eunuchs inhabiting the imperial palace and slight differences in details are also found as he stated, “In China eunuchs have existed for ages. The emperor has a retinue of them, which if full would number 3,000, but as a fact there are at present only about 2,000. They perform the work of the house-hold and are divided into forty-eight classes under proper officers. All the emperor’s sons and sons-in-law are obliged to keep from thirty down to four eunuchs each. Most of these servants were castrated by their parents (not always poor) between the ages of four and eight years, because it insures the children a career in which they can get a good living.” S. Wells Williams, The Middle kingdom : a survey of the ... Chinese empire and its inhabitants, 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: John Wiley, 1859). 407-08.


73 Idem.

74 Idem.


76 Idem.


79 Coltman in his article “Self-Made Eunuchs” wrote that he felt ‘disgust and contempt’ for self-emasculates, especially those who emasculated themselves as adults to spite their fathers or to gain employment as palace eunuchs. Therein, Coltman highlighted the lackadaisical approach Stent mentioned seven years earlier. He also made mention of self-emasculated eunuchs themselves (one with a razor, the other with a butcher knife) in order to deprive their fathers of heirs. Coltman expanded upon Stent’s notion of being moral-less and even immature as “self-emasculates” used castration as a form of evil. Coltman, "Self-Made Eunuchs."
into their desires for wealth and resorted to “mutilating” themselves instead of living a moral and ethically upright life.\textsuperscript{80}

Giving light to the glorious job opportunities castration offered, Stent summed up the services eunuchs provided as dealing with both outdoor and indoor duties; after all, emasculated men provided all services in the palace. Providing a means of reference to jobs in Western countries, he enlightened his audience of the services. They included carrying water, being guards, chair bearers, gardeners, “cooks, chamber, parlor, scullery maids, and persons of that class in our own [Western] countries.”\textsuperscript{81} Evidently, his audience was not just England, but rather was inclusive of a larger audience extending to Western countries such as the United States.

Further elucidating additional “special employments of eunuchs” he focused on a service “which may be styled of a religious nature” as he referred to the duties attached to the emperor’s harem (and to his “licentiousness”).\textsuperscript{82} If the emperor wished the presence of any particular concubine, he would give a label or tally with the name of the concubine to the eunuch. Much like a purchase order, or shopping transaction, where the goods are delivered, the eunuch would fetch the desired concubine and would then take her to the “emperor's sleeping apartment” for her to fulfill her duty and satisfy the emperor’s needs.\textsuperscript{83} Upon pleasing the emperor, the concubine would not “dare get into the emperor's bed in the usual manner—that is, from the head, or rather, side—but it [was] etiquette for her to crawl in from the foot till she [came] in a line with her imperial bedfellow.”\textsuperscript{84} After all, unlike a proper Christian matrimony, in which a woman is a wife and is cared for, the concubines the emperor kept were only objects, perhaps even slaves, of sexual licentiousness. In the meantime, two eunuchs would guard the door and before sunrise, they would wake up the concubine and take her back to her own apartment.\textsuperscript{85} The eunuchs then would record the name of the concubine and the date of visitation. Recording the visit provided a means to “substantiate the legitimacy of the child, in the event of the concubine giving birth to one.”\textsuperscript{86} Holding the record of what could potentially be the birth of the next ruler, it was of “utmost important that this book should be strictly kept; and the visit of every lady to the emperor’s sleeping apartment [was] consequently carefully registered and attested.”\textsuperscript{87} Evidently, despite prohibiting the entrance of males into his palace—given those who did enter were no longer considered males but were eunuchs—and prohibiting the free roaming of his concubines outside the palace walls, the emperor still felt anxiety towards his concubines and the potential of their infidelity. Of course, there would be no necessity for such record keeping—and eunuchs in general—if the emperor were not self-indulgent but rather an upright Christian with one wife with whom to have intercourse.

Stent proceeded to establish a repertoire of traits, gestures, and emotions associated with the eunuch while contrasting it to the relatively more familiar “barbarian, uncivilized” Chinese

\textsuperscript{80} Michel Foucault, Alan Sheridan, and Michel Foucault, \textit{The archaeology of knowledge} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). 42.
\textsuperscript{81} Stent, “Chinese Eunuchs,” 173.
\textsuperscript{82} Idem.
\textsuperscript{83} Idem.
\textsuperscript{84} Idem.
\textsuperscript{85} Idem.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Ibid.}, 168.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, 175.
identity. He used the knowledge that had already circulated in the West about the Orient to distinguish eunuchs from other Chinese (non-eunuchs) in terms of their character. Consequently, the audience’s “experience itself [was] selected by stereotyped meanings and shaped by ready-made interpretations.” For instance, when detailing the habits of eunuchs he separated eunuchs from the greedy stereotype already in place for Chinese, as they a reputation of being “too money-loving” according to Western viewpoints. He noted a difference between eunuchs and Chinese was that Chinese were always “squeezing” people for all the money they could. Many Chinese, he excluded, made large sums of money in “various ways, such as by pretending to facilitate, or really facilitating the business of those having audience; making them comfortable while waiting, by supplying them with tea, pipes, etc., and the thousand and one other ways by which a true Chinaman knows how to ‘turn an honest penny.’” By referring to “squeezing,” Stent used the Chinese way of trying to maximize their profit while providing little real service to separate the unethical lazy Chinese way of doing business, from the Western upright and ethical way of doing business. Upon establishing such difference, Stent continued to draw lines of distinction within his environment and his audience’s environment. He differentiated eunuchs and Chinese to note distinctly that although the eunuchs were Chinese by birth, they were not the same as the non-castrated Chinese. Unlike non-castrated Chinese, eunuchs did not “care to haggle over a bargain;” knowing that eunuchs did not haggle, Chinese sellers, or workers took advantage of them. The seller or worker would manipulatively say, “‘give me what you please,’ and for a trifling job, or for goods not worth half-a-dozen cash, he is [was] sure to receive a handful; so that this class of people generally trust to a eunuch’s generosity, and invariably get [got] the best of the bargain.” Stent further noted that “in paying for small articles too, they rarely take [took] back any change” for they were seldom known to be mean or stingy. Essentially non-eunuch Chinese were money hungry individuals eager to profit and exploit anyone—even a Chinese eunuch buyer. Eunuchs, as victims of the greed and sexual

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89 Interestingly, several contradictory representations were disseminated throughout the nineteenth century. Floyd Cheung notes that “American journalists, cartoonists, novelists, and playwrights represented Chinese American men as both docile pets and nefarious invaders; potential citizens and unassimilable aliens; effeminate, queue-wearing eunuchs and threateningly masculine, minotaur-like lotharios.” For more on visual representation see Floyd Cheung, "Anxious and Ambivalent Representations: Nineteenth-Century Images of Chinese American Men," The Journal of American Culture 30, no. 3 (2007): 293.
91 Stent, Chinese Legends: 184.
93 Idem.
94 Idem.
95 Idem.
96 Unlike Stent, Coltman was not impressed with eunuchs’ generosity. He detailed his treating of a eunuch who was in good health and had “amazed considerable wealth but he is miserly in the extreme.” After treating a eunuch, Coltman commented that he was rewarded “with a present of four miserable oranges.” After treating a eunuch, Coltman commented that he was rewarded “with a present of four miserable oranges.” He also noted an instance of a “young boy of seventeen years who had made himself a eunuch to spite his father” asked Coltman for his urethra to be re-opened. Upon operating on him, he lost the catheter Coltman had provided him with and “allowed the orifice to gradually close.” Coltman then “slit up the cicatrix again and lent him a bougie to have it copied in silver, he promising to return it the next day.” Coltman stated that since then he never saw “him or the bougie” again. To Coltman, this eunuch was also greedy as he not only utilized Coltman’s services but also stole from him. Robert Coltman, "Peking Eunuchs," The China Medical Missionary Journal 8, no. 28-29 (1894).
desire of others (in most cases) were innocent individuals being exploited by Chinese in every possible form—taking from them everything they had in life; from their genitals to their monies. Perhaps such comment is not solely based on observation, but rather influenced by his share of experiences in dealing with Chinese sellers and workers, and thus was a projection of the exploitation and dissatisfaction he felt in dealing with non-castrated Chinese. By making such distinctions, Stent provided an account that further encapsulated the eunuch identity into his defined parameters. He also reaffirmed the defilement that non-Christian Chinese brought upon the world. Circulated by Western travellers in the East, such negative stereotypes of Chinese also fuelled through the interaction with Chinese migrants in the West. They reaffirmed the notions that Westerners had of “Chinese criminality, alienness, [and] racial inferiority.” Therefore for his audience, albeit not having interactions with eunuchs, the description Stent provided inclusive of stereotypes of Chinese became a reality as their predisposed notions of Chinese were already tainted by “a systematic ordering of ideas” comprised of information disseminated from abroad as well as domestically.

To contextualize further the relationship between his audience and characteristics of eunuchs, Stent played on the anxieties of Western social issues brought upon by Chinese in the West. Stent noted that almost all eunuchs smoked opium. In the West, smoking opium was considered “an Asiatic vice” which was “a foul blot on society—a hideous, loathsome moral leprosy, paralyzing the mind and wrecking the body,” essentially a foul cancer which ate the vitals of society and destroyed “all who were drawn within its horrible spell.” Moreover, the opium den and its patrons “evoked a lascivious picture” to his Western audience. As patrons of “smoking establishments,” all eunuchs gambled and spent most of their leisure time smoking opium, gambling or doing both. While he lightly mentioned opium in relation to eunuchs, his mere mention of opium-correlated eunuchs with “a drug that sapped [the user’s] strength, their money, and their dignity.” Yet, Stent sympathetically noted that such was “their greatest source of enjoyment.” If they did not smoke opium or gamble, they would “have no pleasure;” after all, they were victims of their emperors’ greed for pleasure and lived their lives unable to feel any natural pleasures without their manhood. Much like the notion in the West that “women lacked the power to endure pain and stress and, therefore, needed medicinal-opium to help them,” Stent directed his audience to understand that eunuchs needed opium and gambling to cope with their painful lives. In the interest of heightening male superiority, social stability, and social order, Stent subordinated women, eunuchs, and their inability to cope with life and thus their need to smoke opium. He augmented the Western imagination of itself as a

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101 Ibid., 17.
102 Ibid., 25.
104 Idem.
masculine, rational, active power that penetrated and possessed the feminine, irrational, and passive Orient.\textsuperscript{107}

Further relating women with eunuchs, Stent proceeded to assess the eunuch body physically by associating eunuchs with the feminine gender of the traditional West. Despite his claim that the majority of eunuchs were repulsive looking, Stent noted that one could “almost imagine some of them to be young women dressed in men's clothing.”\textsuperscript{108} According to Stent, all eunuchs, lost “their natural voices, those who underwent the operation when children” could scarcely be distinguished “from young women by the voice.”\textsuperscript{109} Furthering a connection with his audience he noted that eunuchs who were “emasculated” after puberty would speak in “a cracked falsetto—as a Billingsgate fish-fag might,” in other words, they would sound like an old lady selling fish on the streets of London.\textsuperscript{110} Thereby correlating eunuch attributes to those of females. Repulsed by their voices, Stent asserted that there was “something grotesque…in their voices, not by any means pleasant to listen to.”\textsuperscript{111} He further related to his audience by noting that people in China who “personate eunuchs on the stage, such as attendants who usher[ed] in a prince, emperor, or lady of the court, etc.,” would always “make moaning, whining noise, as ‘‘hu-u-u-u, such as a dumb person might make if in a pain or distress.”\textsuperscript{112} By comparing the noise to a “dumb person,” not only did Stent provide a means of comparison, he further denoted eunuchs as lesser beings. Moreover, he described their aging process as something “painfully comical” in which they resembled old women who forgot their age, and sex, and masqueraded in male attire.\textsuperscript{113} Further delineating the social roles which conscribed gendered bodies, Stent associated eunuchs with women. In summation of his description of eunuch physical attributes, he stated that,

Eunuchs may be known by the voice, want of hair on the face, cringing manner, hangdog, bloated appearance (in some), and an indescribably je-ne-sais-quoi, which those who have not been emasculated do not have.\textsuperscript{114}

Providing a contrast between eunuchs and those “who have not been emasculated,” in other words, men in general, Stent affirmed that emasculation took all manhood away from eunuchs.

\textsuperscript{107} Urban, Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion: 57.
\textsuperscript{108} Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 176.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, 179.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Idem.} Taisuke Mitamura in 1909 similarly reported and even quoted Stent as he stated, “All the eunuchs underwent a change of voice after castration, and this was particularly true of those who were castrated in childhood. Their voices could hardly be distinguished from those of girls. After they grew up, their voices became a falsetto of very unpleasant sound. Stent compared it to the shrieking call of a woman vendor in a London fish market. Chinese actors, when playing the roles of eunuchs attending emperors and empresses, speak in artificial, half crying voices and groan like men in pain.” Mitamura, \textit{Chinese Eunuchs: The Structure of Intimate Politics}.
\textsuperscript{111} Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 179.
\textsuperscript{112} Idem.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, 176. Taisuke Mitamura similarly noted that eunuchs “dressed in a long, grey garment called a p’ai tzu, over which they wore a short, dark-blue coat called a kuatxu and a pair of black trousers. Added to this dark, somber costume was a cap. When they walked, they bent over slightly and took short, mincing steps, characteristics that made them easily recognizable even at a distance. Eunuchs were generally repulsive in physical appearance, but if they happened to be handsome and young their feminine ways made them appear lie women dressed as men. As they grew older, however, they acquired and ageless, sexless appearance.” Mitamura, \textit{Chinese Eunuchs: The Structure of Intimate Politics}.
\textsuperscript{114} Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs."
Considering it obvious that the genitals were greatly associated with manhood, he proceeded to associate further attributes of manhood by making an association with what was not present within the eunuch gender. Eunuchs, according to Stent aged “rapidly, looking sixty when only forty;” they were like children who would “burst into tears at a trifle, or give away to ungovernable rage for what another person would scarcely notice;” and were pacified as quickly they were to become angry.\textsuperscript{115} They were harmless and conciliating in manner as if they were sought to ingratiate themselves with those stronger than they were, “by confessing their fawning demeanour—their own weakness and inferiority.”\textsuperscript{116} Indirectly, Stent boosted his manhood and the order of the Western manhood by associating eunuchs with a mixture of exaggerated attributes attached to the thought-to-be irrational female gender and the premature, easily appeased child.\textsuperscript{117} After all, the strong force of a true Western man would cause eunuchs, obviously inferior to the Western man by Stent’s logic, to be intimidated.

Concluding his report on eunuchs, Stent summarized the characteristics of eunuchs. He reaffirmed the connection to women and children by noting that eunuchs were “irritable and excitable” and would “give way to bursts of rage and squabbles like women” yet they were “easily pacified.”\textsuperscript{118} In addition, he urged his audience to reflect, “on the awful deprivation they [eunuchs] have suffered,” and become more “inclined to overlook the many of their [eunuch] failings and to think of them [eunuchs] objects of pity rather than [objects of] execration and contempt.”\textsuperscript{119} Reminding his audience that eunuchs were victims and products of immorality, he provided critical notes for his readers. He stated, that from the foregoing pages of his report it could “easily be gathered that the emperor … [was] the only man who… [resided] in the palace at Peking. One man, only, in that vast enclosure! Well may he be styled the ‘solitary man!’”\textsuperscript{120} Being a solitary man, in a Christian society, was not culturally normal as men and women were supposed to marry and procreate. A victim of his sexual desires, the emperor lived a way of life which was not part of the Western statistical criterion of normalcy and essentially not culturally acceptable.

Further elucidating the lifestyles produced by immortality, Stent exclaimed, “What a life, too, for the ladies! Incarcerated; shut out from the world.”\textsuperscript{121} The palace, he declared, was a “gorgeous prison for them!”\textsuperscript{122} No longer referring to the women in the palace as concubines but rather \textit{ladies}, Stent once again connected his readers to his subjects of description, more specifically, he provided a means to relate the ladies to his readers. Appealing to Western values and the importance of family, he further noted that the ladies would see “none of their male relatives, and only at long intervals their female ones,” and as a result, “their entire nearest and

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{116} Idem.
\textsuperscript{117} Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo: 5.
\textsuperscript{118} Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs," 182. Sir C. A Gordon, a British medical officer, in 1884 through the compilation "An Epitome of the Reports of the Medical Officers to the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service from 1871 to 1882," described eunuchs as, “hysterical, easily moved to violent anger, easily appeased, readily amused or depressed, timid, honest, charitable.” One can presume that Stent’s character associations became a type of stereotype attributed to eunuchs throughout the nineteenth century.
\textsuperscript{119} Sir C. A. Gordon, "An Epitome of the Reports of the Medical Officers to the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service from 1871 to 1882," (London: Baillière, Thindall and Cox, 1884), 225.
\textsuperscript{120} Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs." 182.
\textsuperscript{121} Idem.
\textsuperscript{122} Idem.
dearest home ties must [have been]… severed; the most sacred feelings of the heart” must have “become withered and parched up for want of the nourishment necessary to foster them.” Evidently, the women were victims of the lack of “discipline, order and morality.” Treating the women as victims also, Stent further described the torturous lifestyle they forcefully lived. The women heard nothing from the outside world except for that which was “filtered through the lips of eunuchs.” All the women could gather of what was happening “beyond their prison walls must [have] come to them through that source” he noted referring to eunuchs. Stent reasoned that clearly these were the reasons for which Westerners heard “of heart- burnings, palace intrigues, and struggles for supremacy; each one striving to be favourite so that she [ladies of the palace] call forward her own interests or those of her never-more-to-be-seen relatives.”

They too were victims of the sexual desires and paranoia of the emperor. Yet, Stent did not blame such victimization on eunuchs, or any social role attached to women, but rather on the social deviance and lack of moral of men. Essentially Stent demarked the emperor’s desire to have multiple sexual partners and the inability to practice monogamy as prescribed through Victorian morals as the ultimate culprit of such hardships.

Further detailing additional victims of such immoral society he exclaimed, “And, lastly, what a life for the eunuchs! Their position must be worst of all.” As a summation of the victims of immorality and the lack of Christian values, Stent “at a loss to know which to pity most, the emperor in his solitary grandeur, the ladies in their gorgeous imprisonment, or the eunuchs in their deprivation of all that constitutes what may be essentially termed manhood.” In essence, Stent concluded that the situation for all parties was pitiful and alike they were all victims.

Taking on an analytical approach, Stent thereon continued to identify the culprit of the production of such pitiful lives, specifically that of eunuchs. He asserted, that the origin of eunuchs was a by-product of “polygamy; were it not for that eunuchs would be as rare as unicorns.” By identifying polygamy as the origin, Stent created a direct connection with his audience and issues faced in the West. While eunuchs were foreign to his readers, the notion of polygamy was one for which Stent held great disdain. Didactically imposing his Christian beliefs on to the collective representation of his audience, he proceeded to ask a question which

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123 Idem.
125 Stent, "Chinese Eunuchs." 182.
126 Idem.
127 Idem.
128 Ibid., 182-83. While Stent considered eunuchs victims and subjects of pity, Matignon considered them damned individuals. Quoting the Bible he preached, “The Law of Moses is also adamant that effect. In Chapter XXMDU Deuteronomy, do not we read: ‘He who is for eunuch have been crushed or cut, do not enter into the congregation of the Lord?’” Therefore, to Matignon, eunuchs are unable to be saved by the Christian Lord, for they were no longer at the same level as the divine children of the Lord: men and women. Matignon, "Les eunuques du Palais Impérial à Pékin.." 377. Taking a more moralistic approach, as opposed to Christian, Coltman, remarked, “Yet knowing all the pain and doing that is sure to be theirs, to say nothing of the risk of their life, many able bodied men, voluntarily submit to the operation by others, and not a few perform it upon themselves. Do such specimens of humanity deserve any sympathy?” Essentially, according to Coltman, eunuchs were no longer natural beings, or rather human beings, but products of humanity—a creation and by product of the human-worldly interactions. Coltman, "Peking Eunuchs," 260.
“naturally arises in our [Western] minds.” He asked “how about polygamy in the west?” Evidently referring to the “Mormon Problem” he proceeded to question whether Mormon polygamy would lead to the production of eunuchs as he rhetorically asked his audience, “If the Mormons, who are polygamists, are left to themselves, will they not hereafter introduce eunuchs?” Igniting further anxiety about the possible outcomes of polygamy in the West, he noted that although revolting and painful to think about, the reflection that Mormons were “gradually trending in that direction” was unavoidable. Mormons, in the eyes of Stent had “but a stop between them and the eastern polygamist.” He continued to preach that unless Mormons awoke “to the error of their ways,” or were “compelled to reform,” Mormons would also resort to castrating men and making eunuchs. Thus, he professed that a step towards the recognition of their errors or compelling Mormons to reform “must eventually be taken.” Lastly, he remarked hoping that the Mormon “foul blot on civilization may be ‘wiped out’ one way or another, by common sense and humanity, if possible, by compulsion, if necessary.” Manifestly, Stent’s primary concern was that the West would also produce eunuchs because of ethical and moral deviancy. Thus in efforts to maintain the collective good of Victorian values in the West, Stent urged for “collective obligations and social involvement,” while using the social deviant behaviour which produced eunuchs in China as a teaching tool.

Stent through the discursive formation, construction, and usage of knowledge legitimated the urgency for stronger Christian ethical and moral values. He juxtaposed Chinese and Mormon licentiousness; situated proper Christian values in relation to them; and defined differences and similarities that would lead to the eventual creation of eunuchs in the West. Extending the role of culture to impose on individuals of his audience the collective representation of Christianity, Stent urged his audience members to restrain passions by collective obligations and social involvement. Stent’s observations showed that sexual desires created a set of relations with social political and ideological dimensions that needed regulation under a Christian system of kinship, patriarchy, and households as opposed to creating a new system of relations such as the Chinese eunuch system. By comparing males to the pre-castration stage of eunuchs; females and children to the eunuch inferiority and physical appearance; non-castrated Chinese stereotype to the victimized eunuch, Stent defined levels of social constructs and classifications that were relatable and easily digested by his Western audience. The declaration of such constructs and classifications, and thus affirmation of the perceived differences of all those compared, furthered the righteous moral and ethical standing Stent believed Christians held. As a product of immorality and triumph of temptation, desire and sexuality, the mere existence of eunuchs validated the need for strong Christian moral and ethical values. Not only did eunuchs play a role within Chinese society as palace servants, they also were significant in Stent’s didactic

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130 Idem.
131 Idem.
132 Idem.
133 Idem.
134 Idem.
135 Idem.
136 Idem.
138 Ibid., 45
139 Ibid., 19.
140 Ibid., 31.
Victorianism. His urgency to govern the social bodies of all Westerners with discipline, order, and morality manifested the policing of individuals, bodies, and society that Victorian culture demanded.\textsuperscript{141} Having been socially classified and dissected, compared to negative Chinese stereotypes, and the expected proper Christian roles of the man and the woman, eunuchs proved to be a justification for bodily governmentality. They were essentially a source for the production and affirmation of the need for sexual control, the need to strengthen Christian values and the need to reform the Mormon polygamous practice in the West.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," 522,23.
\textsuperscript{142} While it is uncertain how much of an influence Stent’s \textit{Chinese Eunuchs} had on the “Mormon Problem,” Chinese eunuchs continued to be a source of comparison and anxiety in the West throughout the nineteenth century. Seventeen years after \textit{Chinese Eunuchs} was presented, “western physicians and medical observers in China became fascinated by the Chinese practice” of castration. Melissa S. Dale, "Understanding Emasculation: Western Medical Perspectives on Chinese Eunuchs," \textit{Social History of Medicine} 23, no. 1 (2010). In fact, similar anxieties pertaining to castration, yet not necessarily religiously bound are shown throughout the Journal of the American Association as noted through Mark Millikin’s words, “The castrationists seem to forget that after castration society deals with a eunuch, not with a man; and while lauding the virtues of the lazy, fat, oriental eunuchs, whose ideas of individual rights are almost nil, they overlook the fact that our emasculated product, before deprived of virility, was a desperate, vicious person who had a very clear conception of rights, even thought he had no regard for them. It is very doubtful if the American eunuch would be the docile, useful thing that his Asiatic prototype is. On the contrary, there are many reasons why he would become dispenser of dynamite. There seems to be some casual relation between over-government and explosives. At least they are bound together.” M. Millikin, "Emasculation and ovariotomy," \textit{Journal of the American Medical Association} XXIII, no. 12 (1894).
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